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ABSTRACT

The 14 entries cited in this annotated bibliography provide information on a variety of topics associated with declining enrollments--closing schools, reducing the teacher force, maintaining good relations with the public, using released space, forecasting enrollments, and related planning and policy matters. (IRT)

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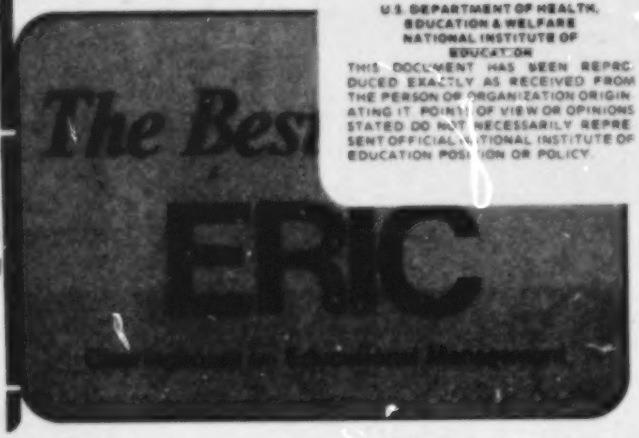

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The Best of ERIC presents annotations of ERIC literature on important topics in educational management.

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This bibliography was prepared by the ERIC Clearinghouse on Educational Management for distribution by the Association of California School Administrators.

Declining Enrollment

Arveson, Raymond G. "Implications of Decreasing Student Enrollments." Paper presented at American Association of School Administrators annual convention, Atlantic City, February 1974. 4 pages. ED 087 120.

Arveson, superintendent of the Hayward, California, Unified School District, offers valuable, concrete advice to districts that must close schools in the face of declining enrollments. In recent years, Hayward has had to close four elementary schools to cope with steadily decreasing enrollments. The closure of the first two, as Arveson points out, was a traumatic experience for all concerned and wasn't finally accomplished until after parents had taken the issue to the courts. The result was a lot of bad feeling toward the central administration.

To avoid such conflicts, he recommends close, constant contact with the community, especially with the parents in areas where closure is most likely. In addition to careful planning and communication, the district should hold public hearings at the school sites and before the board of education.

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Braden, Barbara, and others. ***Enrollment Forecasting Handbook Introducing Confidence Limit Computations for a Cohort Survival Technique.*** Newton, Massachusetts: New England School Development Council, 1972. 60 pages. ED 066 781.

Forecasting enrollments is as much an art as it is a science, according to the authors of this handbook. After studying different projective methods, they found that the results varied, frequently due to local conditions and trends. The variance between predicted enrollments and subsequent actual enrollments was infrequently caused by the projection method used. Successful enrollment forecasting seems "more often a function of the 'clairvoyance' of the planner than of his technical prowess." Therefore, the improvement of the accuracy of enrollment predictions "becomes a matter of increasing the sensitivity of the planner to potential changes in conditions affecting enrollments."

This handbook focuses on the cohort-survival method of projecting enrollments, as well as "confidence interval technology" intended to define the ranges in which enrollments may be expected to fall. It includes work sheets for figuring confidence limits and survival rates. The authors are careful to explain the statistical methods they employ in terms easily understood by the layman.

Order copies from New England School Development Council, 55 Chapel Street, Newton, Massachusetts 02138. $3.50.
Order MF from EDRS, $0.76. Specify ED number.

Brunetti, Frank. "Enrollment Decline. Major Issues for '75." ***CEFP Journal,*** 12, 4 (July-August 1974), pp. 10-12. EJ 102 573.

"The primary challenge of planning for declining enrollment is not expansion as has been customary for planners, but consolidation and/or reduction of programs, facilities and services," according to Brunetti. To meet the management problems created by decreased enrollments, educators must be prepared to carefully evaluate and predict the population patterns in their communities. And they must plan in advance to meet the changes that a smaller school population brings to a school district.

Brunetti lists three "indicators of declining enrollment"—demographic, enrollment, and land use indicators. He points out that decreasing birth rates are "usually correlated with leveling or declining kindergarten enrollments 5 years later." Thus, by keeping close tabs on the number of kindergarten students, district planners can get an idea of what enrollments to expect in coming years. Brunetti also notes that as housing density increases, the number of new students goes down.

When faced with declining enrollment, school planners must consider the effects it will have on financial management, personnel, educational programs, and facilities. In some states, "decreasing numbers of students often result in reduced state and local income."

Coleman, Peter. ***School Division Planning in an Era of Declining Enrollments. Occasional Paper No. 19.*** Winnipeg: Manitoba Association of School Trustees, 1973. 15 pages. ED 075 924.

Coleman's general argument in this paper is that for small elementary schools faced with declining enrollments, "the reduction in quantity of education offered can allow boards to

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improve the quality, while holding costs stable." The way in which this goal may be achieved is by grouping students into "teachable" units. Such groups, based on teacher-student compatibility, differ from more traditional groupings based on age, ability, program, or handicap.

These "teachable groups" should utilize team-teaching techniques, as well as open-space concepts, in order to keep costs at a minimum. The employment of paraprofessionals can further conserve finances, according to Coleman. He presents several models showing how these factors can reduce expenses while maintaining educational quality. As he states, "such staff utilization patterns need not be as expensive as the traditional models of elementary school organization." The only additional expenditure, according to his models, would be for supplementary resource materials, especially audiovisual materials, to be used in individualized instruction.

Coleman emphasizes that his models would need modification if applied to larger schools faced with decreasing enrollments. But he points out that the closure of small schools, especially in rather sparsely populated areas, means a drastic increase in transportation costs—costs that can in part be offset by the adoption of his suggestions.

Order copies from Manitoba Association of School Trustees, 191 Provencher Boulevard, Winnipeg, Manitoba, Canada R2H 0G4. Free.
Also available from EDRS. MF $0.76 HC $1.58. Specify ED number.

Decker, Erwin. "The Shrinking Schools." ***California School Boards,*** 34, 2 (February 1975), pp. 28-30. EJ 110 953.

As Decker points out, California schools have been confronted with declining enrollments since the 1971-72 school year. To cope with this phenomenon, the exact opposite of the radical growth that California schools previously encountered, school administrators have had to take drastic action to meet the fiscal demands of dwindling enrollments. Decker notes that the primary financial problem faced by districts with declining enrollments is "how to reduce expenditures in proportion to decreased revenues"—no easy task for schools already in financial trouble due to inflation.

This author suggests three "actions to help school districts to compensate for declining enrollments." First, funding for districts hit by such a decline should continue at "pre-declining enrollment levels" until the districts can develop long-term plans accommodating income reductions. Second, existing state law should be amended to allow for more flexible employment and dismissal procedures. Since the majority of a district's budget is tied up in personnel salaries and benefits, it is inevitable that budget cuts must affect this category, even though such steps will probably antagonize personnel unions.

Finally, the state should "provide temporary waivers of existing law to assist those particular districts experiencing declining pupil enrollments."

Educational Research Service. ***Some Local Policies on Reductions in Force for Professional Personnel. ERS Information Aid No. 15.*** Washington, D.C.: Educational Research Service, 1973. 18 pages. ED 078 554.

As many authors have noted, declining enrollment can have serious consequences for school personnel. Not only does the hiring of new teachers and staff decrease as the number of students decreases, but in some districts, termination of employees must also be considered. This paper deals specifically with the implications of staff reductions made necessary by dwindling enrollments.

As the authors note, school districts are relatively new at the job of laying off personnel. And there is not a lot that they can learn from business and industry, "which go through periodical cycles of layoffs." But it is still essential for districts to develop a clearly stated, "firm" policy governing necessary "reductions in force." Such a policy should incorporate ways to decrease staff, such as early retirement and long-term leaves of absence, without resorting to termination. A well-established "order of layoff" should also be part of the policy.

Sixteen policies, administrative regulations, and negotiation agreement provisions are included in this paper to assist school districts in evolving an equitable, effective termination policy.

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Eisenberger, Katherine E. "How to Prepare the Public for the Closing of a Neighborhood School." ***The American School Board Journal,*** 162, 6 (June 1975), pp. 42-43. EJ number not yet assigned.

According to Eisenberger, the closing of a school "symbolizes the passing of a community's youth and vitality." The district must be prepared to cope "gracefully" with "middle age" when enrollments start to decline.

Five steps should be followed when a district confronts the prospect of closing a school. First, communication within the administration and throughout the community should be well established ahead of time. In this communication process the building principals play an important role, since they are "the most visible school administrators at the local level and they know key people in parent groups."

Next, data must be gathered, records made uniform, and curricula integrated to help ease the transition for students from one school to another. The tension experienced by students, parents, and teachers can be ameliorated by contact between the school to be closed and those remaining open. The community should be directly involved in the process of deciding which schools must be closed. And finally, the local news media should be approached carefully by the district administration to ensure press support for school closing.

Fascione, Daniel P., and **Herron, William P.** "Projecting School Enrollments: A Research or Political Process?" Paper presented at American Educational Research Association annual meeting, New York, February 1971. 12 pages. ED 047 369.

The very process of projecting school enrollment can be fraught with internal and external political conflict, as Fascione and Herron point out. Although "research methodologies and statistical techniques" can be used to objectively predict population redistribution, the final projection, on which distribution of funds is based, is often far from an objective, scientific document. Because groups within the school district and community have an economic stake in projected enrollments, they attempt to influence decision-makers.

Fascione and Herron note that internal conflicts arise between the budget office, which must conserve funds, and those responsible for "assigning teachers and professional staff in sufficient number and with appropriate certification" in the various schools. Obviously, building principals and teachers' unions have a vested interest in maintaining satisfactory enrollments.

On the other hand, "strong external political forces," especially "citizen 'watch-dog' committees," attempt to influence the official enrollment forecasts. Such groups are interested in "adoption of enrollment projection methods that result in the lowest overall estimates of space needs." In other words, they are primarily concerned with saving money, even at the expense of adequate enrollment accommodation for specific areas. Fascione and Herron are highly critical of the "watch-dog" approach to enrollment projection. They contend that such an approach is "self-defeating."

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Leggett, Stanton. "How to Forecast School Enrollments Accurately—And Years Ahead." ***The American School Board Journal,*** 160, 1 (January 1973), pp. 25-31. EJ 067 465.

Leggett presents a method for calculating future enrollments. First, district planners should find out the number of births in their district for a particular year and determine the ratio between births and first-grade enrollments. Next, planners should compute their district's cohort-survival ratio—a ratio reflecting "the relationship between the number of children in one grade level in a certain year and the number of children in the next higher grade the next year." These two steps will enable the district to determine future enrollments "in a ***pure*** situation."

Cautioning that "each enrollment projectionist must crank into the general theory some practical knowledge and specific information about his district," Leggett lists six variables that can affect the "pure" enrollment predictions generated by his formula. Major changes in building patterns can affect school enrollment, as can alterations in the makeup of the community (as when the children of original families grow older). The enrollments of nonpublic schools (including parochial and alternative schools) influence public school enrollment. Changes in transportation (such as highway construction) and in racial integration also affect enrollment. And finally, national migration trends inevitably have some effect on local school population.

Pack, Kenneth, and **Weiss, Edmond H.** "And Specifically, How to Make Productive Use out of All That Yawning Space." ***The American School Board Journal,*** 162, 6 (June 1975), pp. 44-45. EJ number not yet assigned.

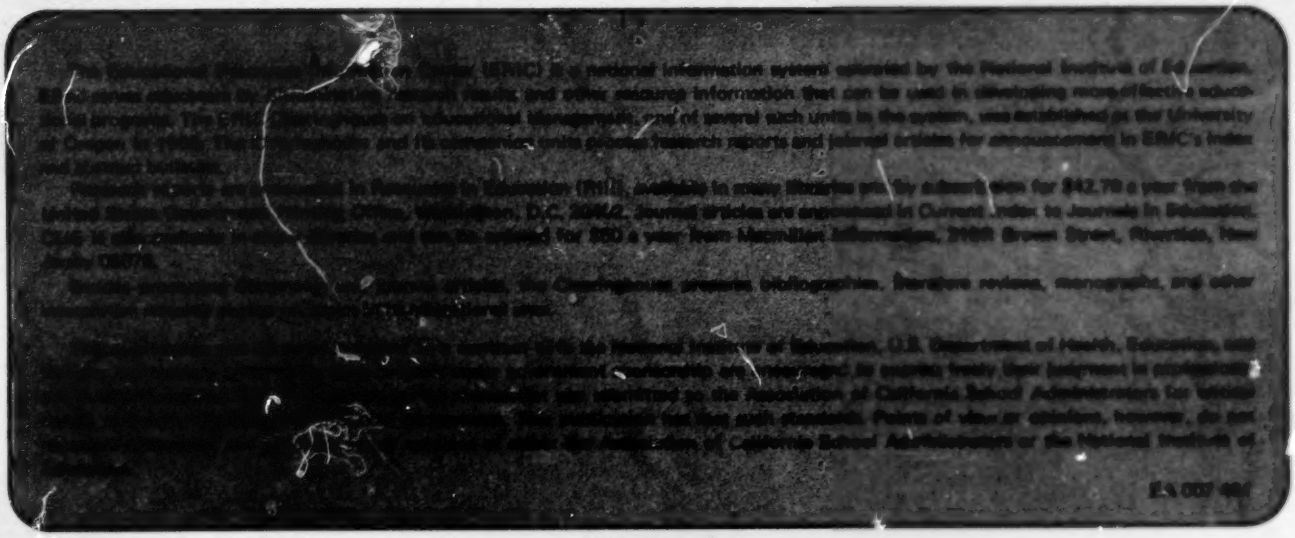
When declining enrollments thin out the ranks of students, leaving classrooms empty, the "excess space can work directly to a district's advantage," according to Pack and Weiss. They emphasize that the district confronted with extra school space should not regard the situation as "an insurmountable problem but rather as a positive opportunity to be exploited in the best interests of the district and the people it serves."

Their list of suggestions on how to utilize surplus building space is directed toward making constructive use of areas made available by declining enrollments. The district may utilize such space for alternative education programs. The public school district can help out parochial schools also faced with diminishing enrollments by providing them facilities for "mini-school" programs. Public school space can also be used by colleges and universities in need of extra facilities. If neighboring districts are overcrowded, school space in underpopulated districts may be utilized, thus redistributing the student population either by redrawing district boundaries or accepting students on a contract basis.

Pack and Weiss acknowledge that some of their suggestions "may seem bizarre or prove to be . . . totally impractical." But their point is well made: excess space calls on the school district to be innovative in its approaches to this result of declining enrollment.

Sargent, Cyril G. "Fewer Pupils, Surplus Space: The Problem of School Shrinkage." ***Phi Delta Kappan,*** 56, 5 (January 1975), pp. 352-357. EJ 109 250.

Sargent's article, excerpted from ***Fewer Pupils, Surplus Space,*** a 1974 report published by Educational Facilities Laboratories, offers an overview of enrollment decline and its implications for facility utilization. Although population growth projections vary in their numerical predictions beyond 1980, they agree that approximately 47 million children will make up the school population in that year. This figure represents a marked decline from the 51.4 million school children enrolled in 1971. The implication of such a decline is clear, according to Sargent. School districts will increasingly be faced with extra school space and with the decision of what to do with it.



Sargent urges districts to plan in advance how they intend to dispose of surplus space. Accurate, up-to-date demographic information should be collected and correlated with data on the condition and capacity of existing schools. Sargent emphasizes the importance of incorporating the community in the process of formulating an enrollment decline plan. He notes that school closure "is less a numbers problem than a people problem."

Sealey, Robert D. "Declining Enrollments: Implications." Paper presented at the American Association of School Administrators annual convention, Dallas, February 1975. 12 pages. ED 106 942.

In this speech, Sealey reviews the major areas of administrative concern arising from decreasing enrollments. He notes that the situation "is not going to get any better or reverse itself" in the immediate future. Therefore, the administration (and especially the superintendent) must provide the dynamic kind of leadership needed to see the district through such trying times. Sealey, like so many other authors, emphasizes the importance of community involvement in deciding how to handle declining enrollment problems.

He recommends that the district form a "Task Force for Declining Enrollment" to be composed of representatives of all interested parties, including teachers, parents, students, and administrators. The purposes of this committee are to increase community awareness of the problems, to formulate the positions of various groups within the community, to establish criteria for changes in facility utilization, and to generate alternatives for the use of classroom space.

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Steele, Marilyn. "Declining Enrollments: Problem or Opportunity?" Paper presented at the American Association of School Administrators annual convention, Dallas, February 1975. 25 pages. ED number not yet assigned.

"As you face the problem of declining numbers of young learners, you can fill your empty classrooms with adults who are the growing age group in our society." Steele's advice to districts facing declining enrollments incorporates the community education notion that education should be available to all members of the community, not just to the children.

Using Grand Rapids, Michigan, as an example, she states that empty classroom space and underused school facilities can be utilized for a variety of education activities. The school-based programs are carried out in conjunction with community centers, churches, senior centers, hospitals, and industries. The financial difficulties brought about by decreasing enrollment of children are, according to Steele, offset by the revenue from state aid and fees brought in by adult students.

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"What to Do If Shrinking Enrollment Forces You to Shut a School." ***Nation's Schools***, 91,2 (February 1973), pp. 12-13. EJ 069 123.

This brief article focuses on the plight of California school districts having to handle declining enrollments. Since many districts built new schools back in the days when 300,000 people were moving into the state per year, they are now faced with loans that aren't paid off on buildings they no longer need. The only solution in some cases is to sell excess building space, with the profits (if any) going to the state. Depending on where the unneeded school building is located, it can bring in a handsome profit, especially if the land it is on is high-value commercial property.

However, this article advises other courses of action before sale, such as leasing and renting. In California at least, according to the state superintendent of public instruction, enrollment will begin increasing again, though not for several years. It would be unwise for districts to sell buildings that they may need again after 1980 or so.

This article also includes some interesting examples of how school districts across the country have handled the sale of empty buildings.